

Media, PA — Today Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) attended a Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) hearing related to Superior Tube, and made a formal statement on TCE emissions. — While the hearing was formally held to accept public comment on a Superior Tube's Plan Approval Application (46-0020E) to remove a degreaser from service, the first hour of the evening was devoted to discussing the recent incident where 2,400 pounds of the hazardous gas, trichloroethylene (TCE) was released over a two hour period on July 10, 2007. Below is his publicly-issued statement:

On July 10, Superior Tube allowed the escape of 2,400 pounds of toxic gas, trichloroethylene (TCE), into the air in just over a two hour timeframe. This is 60 times more than the allowed amount.

Not only did Superior Tube release far more TCE than allowed by law, it violated a requirement to report the emission within a two hour period by waiting 19 hours. When they did report the emission – they subsequently underreported the figure by 2,300 pounds. The good faith they failed to demonstrate in their reporting is the reason action needs to be taken.

The company's permit allows the emission of 15 pounds of TCE per hour from the equipment that malfunctioned not the +1,000 pounds per hour during the incident totaling close to a full weeks worth of pollution. This is reckless and unacceptable behavior that jeopardizes the health and safety of people living in the surrounding community, and should not be tolerated.

Before this incident, a year of testing by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) had found that TCE levels in the Collegeville area were significantly higher than in other areas of the state. Scientists feel this will create serious health risks to residents of these areas.

As described by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), TCE is used mainly as a solvent to remove grease from metal parts, but it is also an ingredient in adhesives, paint removers, typewriter correction fluids, and spot removers. TCE is not thought to occur naturally in the environment. However, it has been found in underground water sources and many surface waters as a result of the manufacture, use, and disposal of the chemical. Breathing small amounts may cause headaches, lung irritation, dizziness, poor coordination, and difficulty concentrating. Breathing large amounts of trichloroethylene may cause impaired heart function,

unconsciousness, and death. Breathing it for long periods may cause nerve, kidney, and liver damage. Drinking large amounts of trichloroethylene may cause nausea, liver damage, unconsciousness, impaired heart function, or death. Drinking small amounts of trichloroethylene for long periods may cause liver and kidney damage, impaired immune system function, and impaired fetal development in pregnant women, although the extent of some of these effects is not yet clear. Skin contact with trichloroethylene for short periods may cause skin rashes.

Effective April 17, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized new regulations that exempt three industry sectors from prescribed emission limitations – Superior Tube was among the exempt industries.

Why are some industries required to meet such stringent -- and appropriate -- emission standards while other industries, including narrow tube manufacturing, are not? During a conference call with the EPA, I was told that during consideration of the new regulations, they strongly felt that a cost benefit analysis validated their decision to exempt certain industries from the new regulations. The cost benefit of certain industries and the long-and-short term health of the residents in Collegeville are not mutually exclusive. Putting the industry before the individual should not be tolerated.

We need accountability at the Federal level to ensure this does not happen again. Superior Tube has said it plans to reduce emissions by 30% this year – but this is not enough. The EPA was established in 1970 and charged with protecting human health and safeguarding the natural environment; therefore, I am calling on the EPA to include the three exempt industries in the April 17 regulation and show environmental stewardship for which it was established.

In May I sent a letter to the EPA Administrator asking to amend the ill-conceived regulation exempting certain industries from adhering to the new, stricter, pollution standards. I also participated in a conference call with the Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation, the EPA Air Quality Division, and the Region III Congressional Liaison trying to make sense out of the decision that was made to enact the April 17 regulation. I have been in contact with the EPA on a weekly basis to get this resolved, and will continue to push until it is to the satisfaction of the area residents. The residents of Collegeville need to know they are safe in their homes, and not unknowingly being poisoned.

Born and raised in the Delaware, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31

years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of “Deep Blue,” the Navy’s anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the “Global War on Terrorism.” He served as President Clinton’s Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.